

Maithili language

Maithili (/ˈmaɪtɪli/ ^[10] *Maithili*) is an Indo-Aryan language native to the Indian subcontinent, mainly spoken in India and Nepal. In India, it is spoken in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand and is one of the 22 recognised Indian languages.^{[11][1][2]} In Nepal, it is spoken in the eastern Terai and is the second most prevalent language of Nepal.^{[12][13]} Tirhuta was formerly the primary script for written Maithili. Less commonly, it was also written in the local variant of Kaithi.^[14] Today it is written in the Devanagari script.^[15]

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Official status

In 2003, Maithili was included in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution as a recognised Indian language, which allows it to be used in education, government, and other official contexts in India.^[11]

The Maithili language is included as an optional paper in the UPSC Exam.

In March 2018, Maithili received the second official language status in the Indian state of Jharkhand.^[16]

Geographic distribution

In India, Maithili is spoken mainly in Bihar and Jharkhand in the districts of Darbhanga, Saharsa, Samastipur, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Sitamarhi, Begusarai, Munger, Khagaria, Purnia, Katihar, Kishanganj, Sheohar, Bhagalpur, Madhepura, Araria, Supaul, Vaishali, Ranchi, Bokaro, Jamshedpur, Dhanbad and Deoghar. constitute cultural and linguistic centers.^[17]

In Nepal, Maithili is spoken mainly in the Outer Terai districts including Sarlahi, Mahottari, Dhanusa, Sunsari, Siraha, Morang and Saptari Districts. Janakpur is an important linguistic centre of Maithili.^[17]

Classification

In the 19th century, linguistic scholars considered Maithili as a dialect of Bihari languages and grouped it with other languages spoken in Bihar. Hoernlé compared it with Gaudian languages and recognized that it shows more similarities with Bengali languages than with Hindi. Grierson recognized it as a distinct language and published the first grammar in 1881.^{[18][19]}

Chatterji grouped Maithili with Magadhi Prakrit.^[20]

Dialects

Maithili	
मैथिली / मैथिनी	
 মৈথিলী मैथिली	
 Maithili in traditional Tirhuta and recent Devanagari script	
Native to	India and Nepal
Region	Bihar and Jharkhand in India; ^{[1][2]} Province No. 2 and Province No. 1 in Nepal
Ethnicity	Maithil
Native speakers	30–35 million (2000) ^{[3]} (only 13.58 million reported their languages as Maithili on the 2011 census of India; ^{[4]} as many consider it to be a variety of Hindi
Language family	Indo-European - Indo-Iranian - Indo-Aryan - Eastern - Bihari Maithili
Dialects	Central (Sotipura) Thēthi Bajjika ^{[5][6]} (Recognized as distinct language in Nepal) ^{[7]} Madhur Jolaha Kisan Khortha
Writing system	Tirhuta (Mithilakshar) (Former) Kaithi (Maithili style) (Former) Devanagari (Current)
Official status	
Official language in	 India (8th schedule of Constitution of India, Jharkhand) ^{[8]}
Language codes	
ISO 639-2	mai (https://w

Maithili varies greatly in dialects.^[21] The standard form of Maithili is Sotipura or Central Maithili or Madhubani dialect^[22] which is mainly spoken in Darbhanga and Madhubani districts in Bihar, India.^[23]

- Bajjika dialect of Maithili is spoken in Samastipur, Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur, Vaishali, East Champaran and West Champaran districts of Bihar in India. Bajjika is listed as a distinct language in Nepal and overlaps by 76–86% with Maithili dialects spoken in Dhanusa, Morang, Saptari, and Sarlahi Districts.^[24]
- Thêthi dialect is spoken mainly in Kosi, Purnia and Munger divisions of Bihar, India and some adjoining districts of Nepal.^[25]

Several other dialects of Maithili are spoken in India and Nepal, including Dehati, Kisan, Bantar, Barmeli, Musar, Tati, Kortha and Jolaha. All the dialects are intelligible to native Maithili speakers.^[17]

Origin and history

The name Maithili is derived from the word Mithila, an ancient kingdom of which King Janaka was the ruler (see Ramayana). Maithili is also one of the names of Sita, the wife of King Rama and daughter of King Janaka. Scholars in Mithila used Sanskrit for their literary work and Maithili was the language of the common folk (Abahatta).

The beginning of Maithili language and literature can be traced back to the 'Charyapadas', a form of Buddhist mystical verses, composed during the period of 700-1300 AD. These padas were written in Sandhya bhasa by several Siddhas who belonged to Vajrayana Buddhism and were scattered throughout the territory of Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Odisha. Several of Siddas were from Mithila region such as Kanhapa, Sarhapa etc. Prominent scholars like Rahul Sankrityanan, Subhadra Jha and Jayakant Mishra provided evidences and proved that the language of Charyapada is ancient Maithili or proto Maithili.^[26] Apart from Charyapadas, there has been rich tradition of folk culture, folk songs and which were popular among common folks of Mithila region.

After the fall of Pala rule, disappearance of Buddhism, establishment of Karnāta kings and patronage of Maithili under Harasimhadeva (1226–1324) of Karnāta dynasty dates back to the 14th century (around 1327 AD). Jyotirishwar Thakur (1280–1340) wrote a unique work *Vārnatnākara* in Maithili prose.^[27] The *Varna Ratnākara* is the earliest known prose text, written by Jyotirishwar Thakur in Mithilaksar script,^[18] and is the first prose work not only in Maithili but in any modern Indian language.^[28]

In 1324, Ghyasuddin Tughluq, the emperor of Delhi invaded Mithila, defeated Harisimhadeva, entrusted Mithila to his family priest Kameshvar Jha, a Maithil Brahmin of the Oinwar dynasty. But the disturbed era did not produce any literature in Maithili until Vidyapati Thakur (1360 to 1450), who was an epoch-making poet under the patronage of king Shiva Singh and his queen Lakhima Devi. He produced over 1,000 immortal songs in Maithili on the theme of love of Radha and Krishna and the domestic life of Shiva and Parvati as well as on the subject of suffering of migrant labourers of Morang and their families; besides, he wrote a number of treaties in Sanskrit. His love-songs spread far and wide in no time and enchanted saints, poets and youth. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu saw the divine light of love behind these songs, and soon these songs became themes of Vaisnava sect of Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore, out of curiosity, imitated these songs under the pseudonym Bhanusimha. Vidyapati influenced the religious literature of Asama, Bangal, Utkala and gave birth to a new Brajabuli language.

The earliest reference to Maithili or Tirhutiya is in Amaduzzi's preface to Beligatti's *Alphabetum Brammhanicum*, published in 1771.^[29] This contains a list of Indian languages amongst which is 'Tourutiana.' Colebrooke's essay on the Sanskrit and Prakrit languages, written in 1801, was the first to describe Maithili as a distinct dialect.^[30]

Many devotional songs were written by Vaisnava saints, including in the mid-17th century, Vidyapati and Govindadas. Mapati Upadhyaya wrote a drama titled *Pārijātaharaṇa* in Maithili. Professional troupes, mostly from dalit classes known as Kirtanias, the singers of bhajan or devotional songs, started to perform this drama in public gatherings and the courts of the nobles. Lochana (c. 1575 – c. 1660) wrote *Rāgatarangni*, a significant treatise on the science of music, describing the rāgas, tālas, and lyrics prevalent in Mithila.

During the Malla dynasty's rule Maithili spread far and wide throughout Nepal from the 16th to the 17th century.^{[31][32]} During this period, at least seventy Maithili dramas were produced. In the drama *Harishchandra*nrityam by Siddhinarayanadeva (1620–57), some characters speak pure colloquial Maithili, while others speak Bengali, Sanskrit or Prakrit.

After the demise of Maheshwar Singh, the ruler of Darbhanga Raj, in 1860, the Raj was taken over by the British Government as regent. The Darbhanga Raj returned to his successor, Maharaj Lakshmishvar Singh, in 1898. The Zamindari Raj had a lackadaisical approach toward Maithili. The use of Maithili language was revived through personal efforts of MM Parameshvar Mishra, Chanda Jha, Munshi Raghunandan Das and others.

Publication of *Maithil Hita Sadhana* (1905), *Mithila Moda* (1906), and *Mithila Mihir* (1908) further encouraged writers. The first social organization, Maithil Mahasabha, was established in 1910 for the development of Mithila and Maithili. It blocked its membership for people outside from the Maithil Brahmin and Karna Kayastha castes. Maithil Mahasabha campaigned for the official recognition of Maithili as a regional language. Calcutta University recognized Maithili in 1917, and other universities followed suit.

Babu Bhola Lal Das wrote *Maithili Grammar (Maithili Vyakaran)*. He edited a book *Gadyakusumanjali* and edited a journal *Maithili*. In 1965, Maithili was officially accepted by Sahitya Academy, an organization dedicated to the promotion of Indian literature.

In 2002, Maithili was recognized on the VIII schedule of the Indian Constitution as a major Indian language; Maithili is now one of the twenty two national languages of India.^[33]

The publishing of Maithili books in Mithilakshar script was started by Acharya Ramlochan Saran.

Phonology

Consonants

	ww.loc.gov/sta ndards/iso639- 2/php/langcode s_name.php?cod e_ID=278)
ISO 639-3	mai
Glottolog	mait1250 (htt p://glottolog. org/resource/l anguoid/id/mai t1250) ^[9]
 Maithili-speaking region of Bihar and Jharkhand	

		Labial	Dental/ Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop/ Affricate	voiceless	प p	त t	ट ṭ	च tɕ	क k	
	aspirated	फ pʰ	थ tʰ	ठ ṭʰ	छ tɕʰ	ख kʰ	
	voiced	ब b	द d	ड ḍ	ज dʒ	ग g	
	voiced aspirated	भ bʱ	घ dʱ	ढ ḍʱ	झ dʒʱ	घ gʱ	
Fricative	voiceless	फ़ (ɸ~f)	स s	ष (ʂ)	श (ɕ)	ख (x)	ः -(h)*
	voiced		ज़ (z)		झ (ʒ)		ह (ɦ)
Nasal		म m	न n	ण ɳ	ज (ɲ)	ङ ŋ	
Flap and Trill consonants			र r~ɾ	ड़ (ɽ)			
Lateral			ल l				
Approximant		व (ʋ~w)			य (j)		

- Fricative sounds [ɕ, ʂ] only occur marginally, and are typically pronounced as a dental fricative /s/ in most styles of pronunciation.ः is always added after a vowel.
- In most styles of pronunciation, the retroflex flap [ɽ] occurs marginally, and is usually pronounced as an alveolar tap /r/ sound.
- A retroflex nasal sound [ɳ] only occurs before a voiced retroflex /ɖ/ sound.
- Approximant sounds [ʋ, w, j] and fricative sounds [ɸ, f, z, ʒ, x], mainly occur in words that are borrowed from Sanskrit or in words of Perso-Arabic origin. From Sanskrit, *puṣp(ə)* as *puṣp(ə)*. Conjunct of *hj* as *hʒ* as in *grahjə* as *grahʒə*.^[34]

Non syllabic Vowels

There are four non-syllabic vowels in Maithili- ङ़, ॠ, ॡ, ॢ written in Devanagari as य़, व़, ये़, वो़. Most of the times, these are written without nukta.

Vowels

	Front		Central		Back	
	short	long	short	long	short	long
<u>Close</u>	इ i	ई iː			उ u	ऊ uː
<u>Mid</u>	ऐ e	ए eː	अ ə ə~ɐ	अऽ əː	ओ o	ओ oː
<u>Open</u>	एँ æ~ɛ	ँ ɛː	आ ā	आ āː	अː ɔ	औ ɔː
<u>Diphthongs</u>		ँ əɪ				औ əɥ
		ऐ aːɪ				औ aːɥ

- All vowels have nasal counterparts, represented by "–" in IPA and ञ़ on the vowels, like आँ ञ़ː .
- All vowel sounds are realized as nasal when occurring before or after a nasal consonant.^[35]
- Sounds ɛː and ɔː are often replaced by diphthongs əɪ and əɥ in most of the dialects.
- æ is a recent development.
- ɔ is replaced by ə or even ɐ in northern dialects and by o in southernmost dialects.
- There are three short vowels, as described by Grierson, but not counted by modern grammarians. But they could be understood as syllable break :- अ / ॐ /, ई/ ॠ /, उ/ ॡ / . Or as syllable break ँ in Devanagari and "ː" in IPA.
- ँ is a Unicode letter in Devanagari, (IPA /əɪ/) which is not supported currently on several browsers and operating systems, along with its mātrā (vowel sign).

Diphthongs

अय़(अँ) / əɪ / ~ /ɛː / - अय़सनं (अँ सनं) / əɪsən̪ə / ~ /ɛːsən̪ə / 'like this'
अव़(औ) / əɥ / ~ /ɔː / - चव़मुख(चौमुख) / tɕəɥmʊkʰə / ~ /tɕɔːmʊkʰə / 'four faced'
अये / əɛ / - अयेला: / əɛlaːh / 'came'
अवो (अऔ) / əɔ / - अवोता: / əɔtaːh / 'will come'
ऐ / aːɪ / - ऐ / aːɪ / 'today'
औ / aːɥ / - औ / aːɥ / 'come please'
आये (आऐ) / aːɛ / - आयेल / aːɛl / 'came'
आवो (आऔ) / aːɔ / - आवोब / aːɔb̪ə / 'will come'
यु (इउ) / iʋ / - घ्यु / gʱiʋ / 'ghee'
ये (इऐ) / iɛ / - ये: / iɛh / 'only this'
यो (इऔ) / iɔ / - कह्यो / kəhiɔ / 'any day'
वि (उइ) / uɪ / - द्वि / duɪ / 'two'
वे (उऐ) / uɛ / - वै: / uɛh / 'only that'

Svarabhakti (Vowel Epenthesis)

A peculiar type of phonetic change is recently taking place in Maithili by way of epenthesis i.e. backward transposition of final i and u in all sort of words.^[36] Thus:

Standard Colloquial - Common Pronunciation

अछि / əchi / - अइछ / əich / 'is'

रवि / rəbi / - रइब / rəib / 'Sunday'

मधु / mədhu / - मउध / məudh / 'honey'

बालु / ba:lu / - बाउल / ba:ul / 'sand'

Morphology

Grammatical cases

Nouns are inflected for several cases. Grammarians consider only few of them to be pure inflection.

Case name		Postpositions	Examples	English translation	Singular Inflection	Plural Inflection*
Nominative (कर्ता <i>kartā</i>)			नेन ^९ खैत छौ।	Boy is eating.	Ø (Inherent Vowel)	-(अ)न, -(अ)नि (ə)n ^ə , (ə)nĩ
Accusative (कर्म <i>karma</i>) ^[36]	Definite Object (without determiners)	के ke	ऊ नेनाके खिलै॥	He/she will feed the boy.	Postposition used ←	Ø
	Indefinite Object		बियाहक बाद ऊ पाल॥ नेना	He/she nurture a boy, after marriage		
Instrumental (करण <i>karaṇa</i>)		सँ s̥	नेनासँ गिरल र॥	It was fallen by the boy.	-एँ ङ : **	-(अ)न्हि (ə)n ^h ĩ
Dative (सम्प्रदान <i>sampradāna</i>)		कै, लै, लेल kæ læ, le : l ^ə	नेनाकै खाना खिलौ।	Feed the boy the food.	-(अ)ल (ə)lə	Postposition used ←
Ergative ^[37] (सापेक्ष)‡		न, ने nə, ne	नेने पेड़ देखल॥	The boy saw the tree.	-एँ ङ :	No forms
Ablative (अपादान <i>apādāna</i>)		से se	पेड़से फल गिरलौ।	Fruit fell from the tree.	-(अ)तः (ə)təh -(अ)हु*	
Genitive (सम्बन्ध <i>sambandha</i>)		करै kar ^ə	नेनाक खेलौन छौ।	The toy is of the boy.	-(अ)क (ə)k ^ə -(अ)र (ə)r ^ə	-करै, -आँक ke : r ^ə , ā : kō ^ə
Locative (अधिकरण <i>adhikaraṇa</i>)		मै mē : (Inessive), पर, पै pər, pæ (Superessive)	छतपर रखने ॥	It is placed on the terrace.	-ए e : ** -(अ)हि*	-आँ ā :
Postpositional (परसर्गीय <i>parasargīya</i>)§			अगलऽ महीनामै होय॥	It will happen in next month.	Ø (In र, इ, ढ, ल, न, ब stems -आ a :)	-(अ)न, -(अ)नि (ə)n ^ə , (ə)nĩ
Vocative (सम्बोधन <i>sambodhana</i>)			रै नेनऽ ओ।	O boy! Come.	Ø	(ə)n ^ə , (ə)nĩ

- *These forms are abundant in literature, but are less used in spoken language.
- †It is a form came from locative.
- ‡**Ergative** is more used in eastern and southern dialects. Maithili also has parallel accusative structure and both can be used. If **ergative** is used, then nominative is used as **absolute**.
- Used only in neuter and inanimates.
- §It is used, when a postposition is added to the word. Some other postpositions are-

Case name	Postposition
Allative	दक dəkə
Terminative	तक, ला tək ^ə , la :
Abessive	बिनु binu
Adverbial	जकाँ, सोँ dʒəkā : , sō :
Genitive adjectives	Masculine object क ^९ , र ^९ k ^ə , r ^ə
	Feminine object कि, रि kɪ, rɪ
	Neuter object कऽ, रऽ kə : , rə :

Some postpositions are added to the genitive too.

- Inflectional plural is less in use than the Periphrastic one, and is mostly found in literature.
- Periphrastic Plural is made by suffixes like सभ səb^{hə}; लोकनि loːknɪ, सबहि səbəhɪ, गण gəɳ^ə, जन dʒən^ə could be used for animates and अरनि aːrənɪ, सनि səni for all.

Common vowel stem

Case name	Singular Inflection			Plural Inflection		
	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter	Feminine	Masculine	Neuter
Nominative	-इ I	-अ ^s ɔ	-अऽ əː	-इन In ^ə	-अन, -अनि ən ^ə , ənɪ	-अन, -अनि ən ^ə , ənɪ
Accusative (Indefinite)	-ई iː	-अऽ əː		-ई iː	-अऽ əː	
Instrumental	Postposition used		-एँ ěː	Postposition used		-अन्हि ən ^h ɪ
Dative	Postposition used					
	-इल Ilə	-अल ələ		No forms		
Ergative	-इयै Iĕː	-एँ ěː				
Ablative	-इतः Itəh	-अतः ətəh				
Genitive	-इक Ik ^ə , इर Ir ^ə	-अक ək ^ə , -अर ər ^ə		-ईक Īːk ^ə	-आँक ăːk ^ə	
Locative	Postposition used		-ए eː	Postposition used		-आँ ăː
Vocative	-इ I/ई iː	-अऽ əː		-इन In ^ə	-अन, -अनि ən ^ə , ənɪ	

Adjectives

The difference between adjectives and nouns is very minute in Maithili. However, there are marked adjectives there in Maithili.

	Masculine	Feminine	Neuter
Definite	-क ^s kɔ	-कि/कि kɪ/kɪ	कऽ kəː
Indefinite	-अ ^s ɔ	-इ/ई I/Ī	अ/अऽ ə/əː

Pronouns

Pronouns in Maithili are declined in similar way to nominals. However, genetic case has a different form in most of the pronouns. The lower forms are Accusative and Postpositional. Periphrastic Plural is used to form Plurals.

Person		First Grade Honour	Honorofic	High Honorofic
First Person		हम həm̐		
		अपना ep̐na: (Inclusive)		
		हमरा həm̐ra:		
		अपना ep̐na: (Inclusive)		
Second Person		तौहें tō:h̐	अहाँ ehā:	अपने ep̐ne:
		तौहेंरा tō:h̐ra:		
Third Person	Proximate	ई i:	ए e:	
		ऐकरा ek̐ra:	हिनका hɪn̐ka:	
		ए e: (Neuter)		
		ऐहि, ऐँ, अथि ehɪ, æ, etʰɪ (Neuter)		
	Non-Proximate	ऊ, वा u:, ʋa:	औ o:	
		ओकरा ok̐ra:	हुनका hʊn̐ka:	
		ओ o (Neuter)		
		ओहि, औ ohɪ, əʊ (Neuter)		

Writing system

Maithili was traditionally written in their own script which is known as Mithilakshar or Tirhuta. This script is similar to Bengali script. Devanagari script is most commonly used since the 20th century.^[38]

The Tirhuta (Mithilakshar) and Kaithi scripts are both currently included in Unicode.

Maithili calendar

The Maithili calendar or Tirhuta Panchang is followed by the Maithili community of India and Nepal. It is one of the many Hindu calendars based on Vikram Samvat. It is a sidereal solar calendar in which the year begins on the first day of Baisakh month, i.e., Mesh Sankranti. This day falls on 13/14 April of the Georgian calendar. Pohela Baishakh in Bangladesh and in West Bengal, Rangali Bihu in Assam, Puthandu in Tamil Nadu, and Vaishakhi in Punjab are observed on the same day. These festivals mark the beginning of new year in their respective regions.

Names and approximate lengths of Maithili months ^[39]					
No.	Name	Maithili (Tirhuta)	Maithili (Devanagari)	Sanskrit	Days (Traditional Hindu sidereal solar calendar)
1	Baisakh	बैसाख	बैसाख	वैशाख	30 / 31
2	Jeth	जेठ	जेठ	ज्येष्ठ	31 / 32
3	Akhadh	अखाढ़	अखाढ़	आषाढ	31 / 32
4	Saon	सारौन	साओन	श्रावण	31 / 32
5	Bhado	भादो	भादो	भाद्रपद, भाद्र, प्रोष्ठपद	31 / 32
6	Aasin	आसिन	आसिन	आश्विन	31 / 30
7	Katik	कातिक	कातिक	कार्तिक	29 / 30
8	Agahan	अगहन	अगहन	अग्रहायण, मार्गशीर्ष	29 / 30
9	Poos	पूस	पूस	पौष	29 / 30
10	Magh	माघ	माघ	माघ	29 / 30
11	Phagun	फागुन	फागुन	फाल्गुन	29 / 30
12	Chait	चैति	चैति	चैत्र	30 / 31

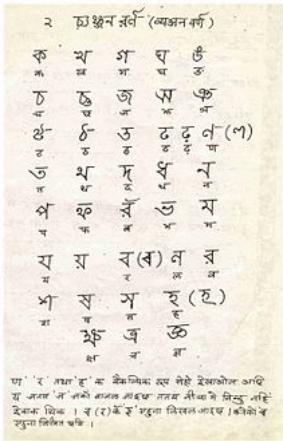
Literature

See also

- Languages with official status in India
- List of Indian languages by total speakers

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Consonants in Mithilakshar

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